

# NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation Board of North Hertfordshire College, held on Monday 17 October 2016 by teleconference.

## PRESENT

Richard Alberg (Chair)  
Jo Charles (Staff Governor)  
Matt Hamnett (Principal/CEO)  
Paul Holgate

Rob Irving  
Peter Johnston  
Vernon McClure  
Ruth Orpwood

## IN ATTENDANCE

Kit Davies (Deputy Principal, NHC)  
Lucy Hann (Managing Director, Hart  
Learning and Development)

Robert Dale (Clerk to the Corporation)

## WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Jo Charles, the new staff governor, to the Board. He noted that a new student President (Sam Coath) had just been elected and would join the Board at its next meeting. Both would also be joining the Quality and Innovation Committee.

Since the last meeting, Adrian Hawkins had resigned from the Board and from the Hart Schools Trust because of business commitments. An appointment would be made to replace him on the Corporation in due course.

## ITEM 1a: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Apologies for absence had been received from Lynne Ceeney, Nick Chesher, and Jeremy Newman.

## ITEM 1b: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- None.

## ITEM 1c: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- The Minutes of the meetings held on 6 June 2016 (the Part 1 and confidential Part 2 meetings) were signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

## ITEM 1d: MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

### *Part 1 meeting*

- *Circulate suggested questions to ask students and staff. Action complete.* These were used on recent learning walks.
- *Summarise quality improvement response against each of the areas Ofsted identified for improvement. Action in hand.* Future reporting will more closely map against Ofsted recommendations.

- *Share example deal review papers and commercial models with Chair of Audit. **Action complete.*** A paper had been developed for the Quality and Innovation Committee and circulated on 29 September (the meeting itself was postponed).
- *Bring a paper on the Board's Schedule of Delegation to the next meeting. **Action in hand*** – deferred to next meeting.
- *Present Annual Safeguarding Report to the meeting on 17 October. **Action in hand*** – deferred to next meeting.

#### *Part 2 meeting*

- *Enhance current business plan to include increased networking and engagement with local and sector stakeholders. **Action complete.*** Increased networking and engagement being planned.

### **ITEM 2: CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE**

Members discussed the report which covered teaching and learning quality, the Group financial position, the impending Area Review, progress towards Hart Learning & Development objectives and estates. Governors asked:

**Question:** *What was the aim of the Area Review programme and what might the outcomes be?* This programme had been conceived of when financial pressure on the FE sector was thought to be getting ever-more acute and the prospect of a substantial cut in the number of FE colleges was widely discussed, not least following an NAO report which had been critical of sector efficiency.

However, neither of the two completed waves of reviews, or the two still in train appeared to have produced radical changes. There had been a few college mergers – but on the whole, changes seemed to have been incremental.

Merger was one possible outcome. However, Corporations were independent and could not be forced to make decisions they did not consider to be in the interests of their students, other beneficiaries or local community. After the end of the Review process, an FE insolvency regime would be established to address failing colleges – rather than the current regime of SFA financial support which effectively served to ensure that colleges could not fail.

Another potential outcome was the creation of an apprenticeship company – a joint venture between FE colleges to aggregate their apprenticeship work to secure economies of scale and better meet local need. This appeared unlikely in Hertfordshire given the dynamic between institutions, though it is possible that the other three colleges would collaborate without involving the Hart Learning Group. The strength of the Hart L&D team meant that it would not be afraid of competition.

A third potential outcome was increased specialisation, with colleges focussing on their particular strengths, and an expectation of even stronger partnerships with employers and funding bodies including Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The first briefing meeting was on 10 November, to which all governors were invited, followed by a Steering Group meeting for Chairs and CEOs only. The advice was to take these meetings very seriously and make a strong pitch for our preferred outcome.

**Question:** *What were the risks for NHC arising from the process?* It was hard to see a major existential threat. The process could distract the senior team from focussing on

improving curriculum quality. There was also a small possibility that one of the colleges in or near the county area fell into difficulty, becoming the central issue of the review – with others asked to consider merger.

**Question:** *Were there any opportunities arising from the process?* The potential for developing thinking around the Institute of Technology policy constituted an opportunity. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement might contain new developments.

**Question:** *Did this wave just involve Hertfordshire colleges?* Reviews are also taking place in adjacent areas including e.g. Cambridge / Peterborough and South East Midlands LEP areas at the same time as ours – for which only the four Hertfordshire colleges are in scope.

**Question:** *Are Review outcomes published?* Yes, eventually. The outcome of completed wave one and two reviews have not yet been published, although some time had elapsed since they were finished.

The Chairman summed up this discussion by stating that the senior team would treat the Review very seriously, while trying to avoid distraction from curriculum and commercial priorities. The Board would be kept informed as work progressed.

The Chairman thanked several governors for their support for the SAR Panel sessions in the previous week. These were crucial elements of work to improve teaching and learning quality and outcomes. The process was not quite complete but would be reported to the Board in December, via the Quality and Innovation Committee. Overall, there was evidence of progress since 2014/15, but work still to be done.

Compliance was better – students had targets, were better at attendance and punctuality, and their progress was being monitored better. There needed to be more consistently good and outstanding lessons; making this happen would take time – it was just five teaching weeks since the Ofsted visit. Maintaining expectations across the rest of the year would help embed and extend this progress. There were some examples of excellent progress (such as Hair and Beauty) but not all subjects were in the same place. Governors asked:

**Question:** *Where it was apparent, how had quick progress been achieved?* In the case of Hair and Beauty, a new manager had set new standards, engaged the team and developed better links between teaching, industry standards and employer expectations. There was a wider sense of heads of departments supporting each other as a team, but there were some areas (Sport and Business) where progress was not as good as hoped, which would probably self-assess as Requires Improvement.

**Question:** *How was student behaviour and attendance?* This term was regarded as the 'expectations' term, in which standards were set and maintained. There was already evidence of better attendance, punctuality, compliance and behaviour, and progress in English for example was markedly better.

**Question:** *How was staff development progressing?* Staff action learning projects were being developed this term. ONE Wednesday sessions were helping to share good practice and developing a culture of higher expectations.

Financially, the position was as anticipated. However, principally because latest NHC enrolment numbers had not shown as much growth as anticipated, the EFA grant for 2017/18 would be lower than it was in 2016/17. The senior team was therefore reducing operational costs, making judicious investments in long-term transformation

priorities during this year. Moving into 2017/18, we should expect that Hart L&D growth will offset (at least in part) the impact of a reduction in NHC's EFA grant; early work on business planning would start in earnest in November.

Governors endorsed the approach being taken to keep the financial position under close review.

**Action:** Keep governors informed about progress with the Area Review.

**ITEM 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Remuneration Committee**

With the resignation of Adrian Hawkins, the Remuneration Committee had lost a member. Its Chair proposed to carry on for the present with three members only, if the Board was agreeable. Members confirmed that they were content; the agreement of the present members would also be sought.

**ITEM 8: DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- Monday 5 December 2016, at Hitchin, starting at 18.00.

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 Signed – Chair of Governors Date

**CORPORATION ACTION LOG**

Meeting	Minute Reference	Summary of Action	Lead/timing
05/09/16	3	Bring a paper on the Board's Schedule of Delegation to the next meeting,	Robert Dale 18/11/16
05/09/16	7	Present Annual Safeguarding Report to the meeting on 5 December.	Kit Davies 18/11/16
17/10/16	2	Keep governors informed about progress with the Area Review.	Chair/Principal ongoing